

very much outdated and very much out of touch and that has shortchanged American innovation as proven by our laboratory in the Department of Energy.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

TURKEY

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, a few days ago, in front of a townhall in northern Turkey, President Erdogan threatened a missile strike on Athens.

Greece is afraid of our missile. They say that the Typhoon Missile will hit Athens.

Then he addressed the Greek people directly and said:

It will, unless you stay calm.

This is a NATO member directly threatening to target Athens, a city of 3 million civilians. According to the United Nations, an intentional attack on civilians—an intentional attack on civilians—is a war crime.

I come to the floor today to condemn the recent actions of the Turkish President, which are not only disturbing, they are totally unacceptable. For years, Erdogan has pursued repressive, anti-democratic policies at home and abroad, from criminalizing insults of Turkey and freedom of expression, to the suppression of dissent and political opposition figures. Erdogan has jailed and silenced so many pro-democracy and human rights activists that at one point, there were more lawyers and journalists in Turkish jails than anywhere else in the world.

His government continues to try to hide the truth about the Armenian genocide, prosecuting writers and historians. In 2008, one of the journalists who wrote about the genocide was assassinated on the streets of Istanbul.

As violent as Erdogan's tenure has been at home, his foreign policy has been absolutely awful. On the eve of Baku's war in Nagorno-Karabakh, Turkey sold Azerbaijan \$77 million of military equipment that was used to attack innocent Armenians.

It is no surprise that Erdogan met in Tehran this summer with the Russian and Iranian Presidents, some of the world's most brutal dictators. Just look at the leaders he collaborates with. It is because he shares their world view, and you can see this clearly in the way he approaches the region.

Five decades after Turkey's illegal occupation of Cyprus, Erdogan is still stoking divisions on the island. Last year, he proposed reopening the Cypriot town of Varosha in an attempt to spread Turkish influence. That is a violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions that was condemned by the European Union. This September, Erdogan threatened to reinforce the already 40,000 Turkish troops in Cyprus with more land, naval, and aerial weapons, ammunition, and vehicles. Clearly, Erdogan looks at Putin's illegal annexation of parts of Ukraine and is taking note. That is what makes President Erdogan's recent comments about

launching missile attacks on Greece so disconcerting.

We have seen Erdogan challenge Greek sovereignty repeatedly. This summer, he sent fighter jets over the Greek islands in the Aegean Sea. His threats to strike Athens fit a pattern of Turkish claims to what is Greek territory. He has said Turkish forces may land in Greece "suddenly one night."

He seems to be increasing his illegal autocratic behavior in the runup to the elections in Turkey next year. In November, he launched an air, artillery, and drone assault on Kurdish cities in northern Syria and suggested ground forces would soon follow. "Payback time," Turkey's Ministry of National Defense tweeted, announcing the operation against the Kurds who have long been a target of Erdogan's wrath, attacking the very forces that are essential U.S. partners in combating ISIS, and in doing so, putting at risk U.S. troops in Syria.

He has been out for revenge at home too. Just last week, one of Erdogan's political rivals, the popular mayor of Istanbul, was sentenced to prison for 2½ years. The charge? Insulting members of the Supreme Electoral Council. The charge was insulting members of the Supreme Electoral Council. That would be the equivalent of an American being put in jail for 2½ years for insulting some State electoral commission or the Federal Election Commission or any entity as such. And in case the prison sentence didn't send a clear enough message, the court also imposed a political ban on the mayor.

Erdogan might be using this aggression and oppression as a diversion, no doubt, from the dire failure of his own economy, he might be doing it out of spite, or he might be doing it because he is a thug. But one thing is clear: The United States must take the Turkish President's actions seriously. Those who just simply say: Oh, well, he is a lot of bluster—they do so at risk. They said Putin was bluster, and we have a war in the European continent.

We need to hold Erdogan accountable for his behavior when he violates international laws or challenges democratic norms or allows his forces to commit human rights abuses. That is why I am calling for free and fair elections in Turkey. I am asking the international community of democracies to condemn Erdogan's jailing of his political opponent. I want our allies to use their leverage to try to prevent further incursions into northeastern Syria. And I am demanding that Erdogan end all overflights of Greece and pull every last Turkish soldier out of Cyprus.

I think, given all of his recent behavior, the United States should not be putting F-16 fighter jets in President Erdogan's hands. That is why, as chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I will not approve any F-16s for Turkey until he halts his campaign of aggression across the entire region. I am sure this won't make me many friends in Ankara, and President

Erdogan has criticized me personally, calling me an enemy of the state. But if standing up to human rights abuses makes me an enemy of Erdogan's; if calling out Turkey, under Erdogan, for arming Azerbaijan and enabling the massacre of innocent Armenian civilians makes me an enemy of Erdogan's; if demanding Turkey recognizes Greek and Cypriot sovereignty makes me an enemy of Erdogan's, that is a badge I will wear with honor.

So to my colleagues here in the Senate, I will close by saying do not be afraid to stand up for American values in the face of Erdogan's aggression.

To the international community, do not hesitate to hold Turkey accountable for violating international law.

To the citizens living in the shadow of Erdogan's Typhoon missiles, do not forget the United States stands shoulder to shoulder with you.

To those people in Turkey who still hope for a free, democratic future, do not give up. One day soon, with your bravery, peace and prosperity will return to your homeland.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the confirmation vote on the Gruenberg nomination occur following the completion of my remarks and those of Senator BROWN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TENNESSEE

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, I have always believed that serving the people of Tennessee requires that I meet them right there in their communities, and I bring their ideas to Washington to put those perspectives to work. What we do on Capitol Hill gets a lot of attention, but back home is where the real work of making this country work really gets done.

So this year, I have completed another of my tours of all 95 counties; that is every county in our State. At every stop, I met with local officials, business owners, civic leaders, and citizens who really keep these communities afloat. That is a task that my Democratic colleagues have made almost impossible with their massive spending bills and their attacks on small businesses.

In so many ways, their situation mirrors that of thousands of families struggling under recordbreaking inflation and broken supply chains. During teletownhall calls with Tennesseans in each of our 95 counties, this was a constant refrain: They are finding more month at the end of their paycheck than paycheck at the end of their month. From the moment their feet hit the floor in the morning until they put their heads on the pillow at night, Tennesseans are counting their pennies and wondering when the Democrats are going to put their radical agenda aside and go back to putting the American people first.